

SPR

S01E10

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NEWS ONE

61 INT. NEWS STUDIO

61

In the studio.

UNDERWRITER

This is SPR.

WENLING CHEN

A band of radiation widely believed to be a catalyst for super powers passed by Earth today. A team of researchers made up of a doctor, his wife, brother-in-law, best friend, and worst enemy took a small space craft out to investigate the band. Upon return, they have tested negative for super powers, but have developed a type of super-cancer never before seen by the medical community. More on this story as it develops.

UNDERWRITER

That was Wenling Chen reporting from SPR, Cape Canaveral.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Live from SPR News in Washington, I'm Deirdre Wilson.

(then)

Heroic Legion trainee Blue Belle, who has been put on administrative leave after video surfaced of her violently accosting protestors in Seattle, broke her two week silence today with a surprising assertion.

BLUE BELLE

I have been told what happened, but that couldn't have been me. I was in a hospital until this morning. I just saw it on the news same as you. I don't know who y'all think it is in that video, but it isn't me.

DEIRDRE WILSON

Hospital records show that Blue Belle had been comatose after miraculously surviving a serious car crash last month. She has been seen publicly performing Legion work since. This adds further speculation to unconfirmed rumors of a doppelganger invasion. The Department of Defense has not returned requests to comment on the possible doppelganger threat.

(then)

Blue Belle faces a month of probation, pending an internal investigation.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from Washington.

(then)

It's 73 degrees here in Paradise City. Coming up next is One Hundred Percent Invisible...

END NEWS ONE

ACT ONE

62 INT. 100I STUDIO

62

In the studio.

ARES

This is One Hundred Percent
Invisible. I'm Ares Greco.

SFX: Red carpet sounds. Camera flashing. Gasps.

ARES (CONT'D)

This is the Heroic Legion's 2020
Fresh Capes gala. It's a
opportunity for the public to meet
new hero recruits, a networking
event, and in recent years, a
fashion spectacle.

FASHION REPORTER

(on location)

Look at her! Ms. Might Lee and her
bold double carbon composite cape.
Oh! Oh! Oh! And here's Dean Boat in
a bold tactical romper.

(gasp)

My gosh, Solar Rexus is wearing the
newest by Isaac Mizrahi. Solar come
over here!

SOLAR REXUS

Hey Janet.

FASHION REPORTER

So. Let's. Talk. Codpieces!

SOLAR REXUS

I'd love to!

Back in the studio.

ARES

The Super Suit for the longest time
was a thing of utility, a way to
hide the secret identity, while
giving its wearer some added
protection.

FASHION REPORTER

Oh my god love it!

ARES

Now the super suit has become a fashion force, with heroes hiring world famous designers and firms to tailor their look. A look that for the longest time was defined by...

RUBY WILLIAMS

T-shirts.

ARES

Screen printed T-shirts. This is Ruby Williams, fashion historian for the Smithsonian's American Superhero Wing.

RUBY WILLIAMS

Up until the nineties, Super Suits had been kind of static. From the wool of the 1950's, to the polyester of the 1970's, to the spandex of the 80s. The suits had remained fairly simple:

(then)

Two toned, with highlights on the briefs, boots, capes and most importantly, on the emblem.

(then)

Nothing was quite as iconic as a simple logo printed across the chest.

ARES

The emblem became even more important in the 90's, once screen printing became cheaper for the average consumer. Again here's Ruby Williams.

RUBY WILLIAMS

So now every hero is clamoring to have an iconic symbol. Heroes who had very slick, very recognizable costumes wanted to get in on this new market.

BILL BARROW

It turned what was a essentially a very minor piece of merchandise into a billboard.

ARES

This is Bill Barrow, owner of the world's largest collection of superhero t-shirts.

BILL BARROW

Before t-shirts, Action Figures had been the fastest way for a hero to gain an audience. The problem is, it's a giant, expensive headache to manufacture.

(then)

I'm talking molds, calls to China, packaging, then risk a huge loss if they don't sell, but with t-shirts...

(then)

For a single paycheck, a small time hero could have themselves fifty units of merch they could turn around for twenty dollars a piece.

(then)

If you had a cool emblem, you had a faster selling t-shirt, which in turn meant fame.

(adding)

So the T-shirt was a real mitzvah to the little guy.

ARES

It was an arms race, and the weapon was graphic design.

(then)

As independent heroes flooded the marketplace, the Heroic Legion found itself behind in a new battle for young consumers."

JILL PAK

We don't like to use the word "consumer."

ARES

This is Jill Pak, who, in 1990's, was the head of marketing for the Heroic Legion.

(then)

In the industry at large she is the woman credited with ending the t-shirt boom.

JILL PAK

We prefer the term "citizen," as we are serving *their* needs.

ARES

It was nineteen ninety five, and the Heroic Legion's designs had become unfashionable. No matter what they came up with, people still preferred indie hero merchandise.

JILL PAK

We were throwing paint at the walls, adding pouches wherever we could, muscle pads to the costumes themselves to exaggerate their already large bodies.

(sigh)

There were a lot of revealing costumes as well, in a... misguided effort to draw the male gaze.

(adding)

The eighteen-to-thirty market is pretty important to us.

ARES

No matter what they tried, the t-shirt remained a staple, until the Heroic Legion class of two thousand.

JILL PAK

We had been getting complaints from our heroes across the nation that the costumes we had been providing weren't practical for real world use. And they were right. Criminals and villains were getting access to better weapons every year and we had to react in kind.

(then)

So instead of trying to design the coolest costume, We tried to design the most useful.

ARES

Function over form. The best way to play, was not to play at all.

(adding)

Almost overnight the colorful costumes of the past were replaced by simple suits, made to military specification. The Legion was once again the leader in fashion, and with it, merchandise.

JILL PAK

Citizens moved back to more
traditional revenue streams. Toys.
Posters. Video games.

(then)

And of course: t-shirts.

ARES

And the best selling t-shirts? The
classic designs of the nineties.

(adding)

While mil-spec is still dominating
designs today, small town heroes
are still using the emblems of old
to stay relevant in changing
market.

Ending Music.

ARES (CONT'D)

Special thanks to Jill Pak, Bill
Barrow, Ruby Williams, and of
course the whole 100% Invisible
team. We will back next time with
more stories of design...

END ACT ONE

NEWS TWO

63 INT. AD BREAK

63

In the studio.

ADS

Support for SPR comes from...

(then)

The Boy and Girl Sidekicks of America. In side-kicking, boys and girls start with their best alter egos and grow into their best Superheroes. It's fun, hands-on learning and achievement that puts kids in the middle of the action, and prepares them for the rigors of super-heroic life.

(then)

Go to our website to find a hero in need of a sidekick near you.

(adding)

The Boy and Girl Sidekicks of America does not condone side-kicking under the age of eighteen. Report any instances of underage side-kicking to your local Boy and Girl Sidekicks of America Squad near you.

64 INT. NEWS STUDIO

64

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

From SPR news in Washington, I'm Deirdre Wilson.

(then)

For the last three months, a decommissioned luxury skyliner, the Shooting Star, has been repurposed as a flying home for those displaced by the president's extraterrestrial policy.

(then)

It has been traveling port to port asking for amnesty for those aboard, getting turned away each time. We spoke with Oliver Rigby, Captain of the Shooting Star.

SFX: Skype call. Fragmenting.

DEIRDRE WILSON (CONT'D)
Fatima thank you for joining us.

OLIVER RIGBY
Thank you for having me Deirdre.

DEIRDRE WILSON
How did you come to captain this ship?

OLIVER RIGBY
The Shooting Star was originally meant to be scrapped in Sri Lanka when its contract was bought by a anonymous donor to house those displaced by the American President. Originally I was to be on the ship for no more than two weeks, and now I've been here for three months.

DEIRDRE WILSON
How are your passengers fairing?

OLIVER RIGBY
They are holding up the best they can. Mostly they are wondering when this will end. We originally were only taking American refugees, but have wound up with people from Britain, Hungary, and China. This is a crisis of the world's making.

(then)

These people literally have nowhere to return to. They come from destroyed planets, universes, entire planes of existence that we cannot access. I myself came from a war torn country, and can relate to their experience.

DEIRDRE WILSON
I sense a deep foreboding inside of you. Is everything alright?

OLIVER RIGBY
We are low on food, water and fuel. Soon the Shooting Star will be dead in the air and we'll have to land her where we can.

(then)

All we can do now is pray.

DEIRDRE WILSON

The UN has been in deliberations about what to do with the vessel, but no decision has been reached.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from Washington. It's 75 degrees here in Paradise City. Coming up next is The Speech Bubble...

END NEWS TWO

ACT TWO

65 INT. TSB STUDIO

65

In the studio.

KELLY CLOSE

From JDHC Houston, This is Speech Bubble. I'm Kelly Close. Let's be honest. We've all been kidnapped. At least at SPR it's a right of passage.

(then)

We've been invited to fake conferences or taken on our lunch breaks as part of a villainous scheme. Some reporters feel that's when you know you've made it. If you're in the public sphere it's not unusual to be tied to a missile, dangled above crocodiles or put on an unstoppable sonic train at some point. But for one woman being held hostage is just part of her daily routine.

(then)

Karen Carter is a television reporter in Denver Colorado who holds the Guinness world record for being kidnapped. We have her in studio today.

KAREN

Thanks for having me.

KELLY CLOSE

So where does the official number stand today.

KAREN

453.

KELLY CLOSE

Oh wow.

KAREN

Yeah. There's a website that keeps count. The creator actually had a fundraising event where they kidnapped me for a weekend. They didn't have my permission though. Does that count?

KELLY CLOSE

I'd say so.

KAREN

Well that makes it 454. David, you've got another one.

KELLY CLOSE

I must say that with that number I'm surprised that you sat with your back to the door.

KAREN

The first time I was kidnapped I was terrified. I had just gotten out of college working my first job covering the unveiling of the new three cent coin at the mint. You know, fluff stuff for the morning show. All of a sudden, I was whisked by terrorists and thrown into a minivan. I was rescued an hour later by Avalantress. The goons were arguing about what to do with me when she tore the top off the van. I was the lead story that night.

KELLY CLOSE

Does any other kidnapping stand out to you?

KAREN

Oh yeah, well I've been sent into space on the outside of a rocket, there was the shark cage, or the room with killer pigs, five six--no I can't even count how many lasers or death-rays (which, really isn't that just a fancy name for laser?). After 454 times it all kinda blends together.

KELLY CLOSE

How many of those 454 was Avalantress the one saving your life?

KAREN

Every time, every time. It feels like I've been in front of every countdown clock on earth, but whenever it gets down to one I just know she'll be there. She's like my own personal hero.

KELLY CLOSE

Outside of when she swoops in and saves your life, do you have a relationship with Avalantress?

KAREN

Ha. Not like that. But we do have a good friendship. We'll do events through the station together.

(then)

Because if Avalantress is there, why not put me there? But she's great, we get along really well. I actually worry though that the more I get seen with her, the more villains go, "Oh all right, this is someone who has Avalantress's attention. Let's get her." Which doesn't make sense to me.

(then)

I mean if I'm a villain and I want to get away with some crime, why would I go out of my way to say to the biggest hero in Denver: Oh hey, look at us, we have your friend! It's silly. I try to tell them that.

KELLY CLOSE

Have you talked to Avalantress about this?

KAREN

Yeah, but what do I want her to do? Leave me to die?

(then)

My fiancée Jenn jokes that I'm going to have two wives. An everyday wife and an "emergency wife."

KELLY CLOSE

Has your fiancée ever met Avalantress?

KAREN

No, Jenn gets really fussy about it. In fact I don't think I've ever seen the two of them in the same room together. Which, I guess means they both feel kind of awkward about it.

KELLY CLOSE

Do you have a picture of the two of you?

KAREN

Yeah. Right, here. Here's us after I got pulled out of a lava pit. The heat makes my skin look great.

KELLY CLOSE

You're glowing. And next to your here. This is Avalantress?

KAREN

What? No, that's Jenn. Ha, have you seen Avalantress before?

KELLY CLOSE

Ah... Ha. Jenn's a very normal looking woman.

KAREN

She's here, if you want to talk to her.

KELLY CLOSE

Oh, is she?

KAREN

Yeah, she worries about me going off to new places.

(sotto)

Not that she would do anything, she's a bit of a scaredy cat.

(calls out)

Jenn!

SFX: The door bursts open. Big wind. Dialogue "off" mic.

JENN

(off axis)

What's wrong?

KAREN

Kelly wants to ask you some questions?

JENN
(Off axis)
Oh. Okay.

SFX: Chairs scooting. Mic repositioning.

KELLY CLOSE
Jenn Daniels. Welcome to the Speech
Bubble.

JENN
Kelly. Big fan.

KELLY CLOSE
So. How do you feel about Karen's
relationship with Avalantress?

JENN
I think it's great that she has
someone keeping her safe.

KELLY CLOSE
Ever get jealous?

Karen snorts.

KAREN
We always joke that Avalantress
should be jealous of Jenn.

JENN
Yeah, after all I get to marry her.
She and Avalantress aren't ever
really that close. Aside from the
rescuing. She swoops in, swoops
out. All business. I get to do all
the fun stuff with Karen.

KELLY CLOSE
Sounds like you and Avalantress are
two halves of the same whole. You
never wish that you could be the
hero? That Karen could see you the
same way she sees Avalantress?

JENN
Me, no. I don't need to. I think if
Karen saw me risking my life out
there, she'd *tell me to stop*.

KELLY CLOSE
Must be hard though.

JENN

Not for me. I'm no hero.

KAREN

That's not really true though. Jenn is my hero. She's the love of my life and when all the things that matter happen, she's the one who's there for me. I love Avalantress, but after I get saved, Jenn's the one helping me put the pieces back together. That's what you really need.

KELLY CLOSE

Alright. Well Karen, any advice for being kidnapped?

KAREN

Well, I think everyone should know the basics of untying knots. Wear comfortable shoes and always carry a snack with you. Most villains don't actually want you to die, they just want someone to talk to, so be a good listener.

(adding)

And it helps if you're friends with someone more powerful than a falling mount --

SFX: Boom! Scream. Wires fizzling. Karen screaming. Mechanical bird sounds.

RAPTOR

Tell Avalantress, if she wants her girlfriend back to meet me at Longs Peak.

SFX: Crashing.

KELLY CLOSE

Oh my, a large robotic bird has just taken Karen from the studio. And Jenn has --

SFX: Sonic Boom.

KELLY CLOSE (CONT'D)

Gone to the bathroom. I'm sure all of us are hoping Avalantress gets there in time to save the day.

(then)

(MORE)

KELLY CLOSE (CONT'D)

In the meantime, David if you're listening, it's time to bring Karen's kidnapping count up to 455. A new record.

(then)

On the next show we'll be interviewing Carlos, the building super as he repairs the gaping hole in our studio wall. For the Speech Bubble, I'm Kelly Close.

END ACT TWO

NEWS THREE

66 INT. NEWS STUDIO

66

In the studio.

DEIRDRE WILSON

From SPR news in Washington I'm Deirdre Wilson.

(then)

New video evidence has further confused the situation surrounding embattled legion hero Blue Belle.

(then)

Surveillance footage from the Charleston Medical Center shows Blue Belle in her hospital room at the same time as cell phone footage shows her attacking several protestors 3000 miles away.

(then)

Blue Belle was unavailable for comments, but the Heroic Legion has issued a statement asserting that they have been made aware of this video and will investigate. SPR will continue reporting as the story develops.

(then)

In international news, the refugee ship Shooting Star has been rescued by the vigilante Cosmos after the failure of the ship's main engine. He has flown the ship and its passengers to the remote pacific island of Isla Selva.

(then)

Passengers have tweeted out support for the hero, and are reported to be in good sprits.

(then)

Isla Selva was famously abandoned by General Genetics after the failure of their dinosaur theme park. The island has been a disputed territory since the company filed for bankruptcy in early 2018. More on this story as it develops.

UNDERWRITER

That was Deirdre Wilson reporting from Washington.

(then)

Today's show was written and produced by John Dorsey and Maximilian Clark. Additional producing by Brendan Sokler and Carla Lerner, This episode's cast include (see website). With special thanks to Brenna Killeen.

(then)

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(then)

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Outro:

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

...Coming up in the next hour, everyone wants to know where Bigfoot is, but not how Bigfoot is. Ben Beltzer reports.

SFX: Music and fade out.

UNDERWRITER (CONT'D)

This is SPR.

END NEWS THREE

END EPISODE TEN